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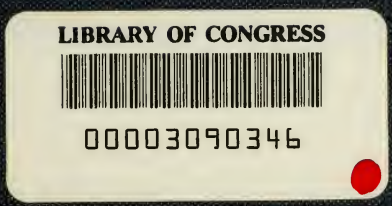

A SCOTCH ANSWER

TO A YANKEE QUESTION.

BY THE SCOTCH POETIC GENIUS.

"O, Caledonia, stern and wild!
Meet nurse for a Poetic child."

WHY IS IT THAT

SCOTLAND,

ENGLAND,

IRELAND,

GREECE,

ROME,

PALESTINE,

ARABIA, and

YOUNG AMERICA

HAVE ALL HAD FIRST-RATE POETS, WHILE MANY OTHER COUNTRIES NEVER HAD ANY?

JAS. M. SCARRITT, PRINTER, TIMES OFFICE, CLYDE, N. Y.
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THE SCOTCH POETIC GENIUS ILLUSTRATED.

In a well written criticism on a Scottish Poet which appeared in an American periodical many years ago, I met with this question—"How is it that the popular mind of the Scotch has produced so large a portion of the very best poetry?" The writer left the question unanswered. The inquiry struck me at the time, whether viewed in its national or philosophical aspect, as worthy of serious consideration: for I do not know any country in which poetry of such a high order has been produced by the popular mind, and where poetry, in all its excellencies, is so fully appreciated by the laboring people, as in Scotland. The poetry of a people is the cream of their thinking, and when the product is of a high order, it is natural to inquire into the causes: for no doubt, whether we can detect them or no, there are causes that account for this. But the attempt to reach these may be difficult, as this, if done at all, can only be successfully done by a thorough analysis of some of the deepest and nicest elements of national character. Every scholar must regret that something of this kind was not done by some master mind among the Greeks. Had Plato or Aristotle—either of whom was quite capable of the task,—investigated the causes whence sprung the wonderful poetry of Greece, the investigation would assuredly have thrown not only much light on the peculiar qualities of the poetry of that people, but would have also unfolded many of the deeper principles of the Greek mind, and explained not a few of the social conditions of Grecian Society. It is true that somewhat of all this, bearing on the question under consideration, may be gathered from the works of ancient histo-

rians, and more especially from the labors of critics and philosophers in their disquisitions on Greek poetry; yet it is plain that the special undertaking to which I refer, cannot be well accomplished now in reference either to the poetry of Greece or of Rome. For he who would successfully analyze national character, so as to discern the elementary causes that have given rise to the poetry of a people, must not only know from written remains what that people were and what they did, but he must have lived among them, so as to have had a full opportunity for observing all the nicer and deeper influences by which the popular mind is moulded.

Now although I have enjoyed to a considerable extent both these advantages in reference to the Scottish mind, yet I feel not a little oppressed with the difficulty of the task I have undertaken. To write a criticism on the prominent characteristics of Scottish poetry, or a critique on any one of our great poets in particular, were not very difficult, and if extracts were given, might be made highly agreeable to any intelligent audience. But to point out the characteristics and peculiar beauties of Scottish poetry, is not the task to which I have set myself; but the far more difficult one of leading you to the fountain head, and shewing you whence a rich and powerful poetry sprung up in the Scottish mind. No intelligent person can fail to see the difficulty of this inquiry, nor can he fail to see its great importance, both in a literary and philosophical point of view. But ere entering on this, it may not be improper to devote a few moments to another difficult inquiry—What is poetry?

To give good definitions of even ordinary subjects, is not easy, while to do this of certain subjects, is nearly impossible. The highest minds have felt it difficult to give a clear and comprehensive answer to the question—what is poetry? A simple and not unwise method has been to point to certain productions as containing *the thing*, which it is so hard logically to define. This method is so far proper,—for plainly he who can see no poetry in the Odes of Horace, the Dramas of Shakspeare, or the Scottish songs and ballads, could be

little the wiser for any definition of poetry that might be given. The man that does not know honey by the taste, could hardly be instructed by a chemical analysis, of its qualities. The difficulty of giving a definition of poetry appears to me to be referable to two causes. First, poetry was long in use among men before philosophical criticism arose with its logical definitions. And next, poetry is a thing so much of taste and feeling, and many of its highest qualities are so subtile, and withal so complex, that mere logical definition is found but a very imperfect instrument for analyzing it.

Yet, will you accept of this definition till a better be found? *Poetry is the highest form of thought, instinct with emotion, and clothing itself in euphonious language, which naturally becomes rythmical.* Now if this be admitted as on the whole correct, then the true poet is one that sees farther than other men, and feels more deeply: yet he must have the art—and in this lies the mystery of his power—of making others see as if with the eye of his soul, and so sympathize with him in his emotions, that they shall, as it were, see and feel as he does. Ordinary minds even at the best, see but the edge of great thoughts, but the poet's eye looks into the centre, and by the magic of his genius, evokes the hidden central meanings of things, so that ordinary minds see these and are charmed with the great, the beautiful and the good in them, as reflected from the poet's soul, till they come to have in some measure, a like image of them formed in their own souls. He that can do this has the Magician power of poetical genius. He is a true Seer—yea a true seer of nature in its lofty and beautiful truths, and a wise expounder of these to other minds. To apprehend great, and beautiful truths, to love and revere these ardently, and to present their qualities in new combinations, is the rare gift and the real triumph of genius. For it is, indeed, only when the poet's whole soul is in devout harmony with the truth of things, that his harp becomes an instrument to enchant not the ear, but the heart of men with the harmony it makes. The poet is in fact a grand *harmonizer:* and the harmony he sees in objects and

sentiments he brings out in the harmony of his numbers: the first is the music of truth in its deeper meanings in his own soul, the latter is the music his verse makes for the ear. Every poet must first of all, understand the harmony of truths, and to give full effect to this, he should be master of the harmony of sounds, that the melody of numbers may aid the melody of thought. Indeed, all great thoughts born of the deeper emotions of the soul, become rythmatical in the utterance. Yet, it by no means follows that he who has an ear apt for the nicer adjustment of numbers, has a soul capable of feeling the wonderful relations of the true, the beautiful and the grand in nature, or in thought and emotion. But this is the essence of all poetry. Metre or Rythm in any of its forms, is but a graceful adjunct. It is a misfortune for a poet not to have a nice ear for numbers; but a far greater misfortune, when the mere euphonious versifier mistakes this for the "gift divine" of seeing clearly the grand relations of things in the great and beautiful. The former is but the dress, the latter the essence of poetry. But as it is not my intention to give a dissertation on poetry, these few remarks must suffice as answer to the question—"What is poetry?

I cannot but think well of the man, who is even fantastically fond of the land that gave him birth and bread, and nursed in him thoughts and feelings in early life. Righteously might the meanest country on earth disown him, who is so base as to have no attachment to his native land. But while I claim the right for myself, to cherish love of country, and accord the same to all others; yet, you will do me great injustice if you suppose that I have chosen the subject which I am to bring before you to-night, merely to give vent to patriotic emotions. My simple aim is to handle the subject under consideration as a deeply important philosophical inquiry, well worth the attention of all intelligent men; for I cannot but think, that if the causes which have produced the peculiar poetical elements in the mind of a people can be ascertained, then you have unfolded some of the profoundest and most powerful elements in the national character.

Poets are by far the truest expounders of the great thoughts and beautiful emotions that lie in the mind of a people. Indeed, when a poet gives utterance to such thought and emotion, I take it that this is an indication that there has been *previously diffused* much of this mental wealth through the national mind. Are not men of genius properly but the spokesmen of the national heart. Hence, when we find a country, age after age, producing many true poets, the inference is, that the popular mind has been thoroughly imbued with all the poetic elements. But as Scotland, from the dawn of her literature, has had a succession of true Bards, we infer that the mind of the Scottish people has all along possessed many qualities admirably fitted to produce the best poetry.

Two things clearly prove this: first, the greater part of the Scottish people have a keen relish for poetry of the best sort. In all countries educated persons can appreciate the worth of true poetry, while even those who have made but little progress in mental culture, can relish their national songs and ballads, which celebrate the scenes of domestic life, and the triumphs or misfortunes of war. This latter kind of poetry has in all its forms, peculiar charms for the Scottish peasant. But then, for our argument it is worthy of notice, that his taste leads him to a far higher and wider range of poetical reading. Not seldom does one meet with farming people and humble mechanics in Scotland, who can fully appreciate the most exquisite beauties of the highest order of poetry. Admit that this refined tase is not universal, yet that you should find many Shepherds on hill sides with a copy of Milton, Young, or Thomson in their pocket, or that you should see the works of these poets lying on the loom of the Weaver, or the seat of the Shoemaker, cannot but give a high idea of the poetic taste of the people. It should not wound one's patriotism, but merely increase his admiration for his fellowmen, did he learn that the choicest productions of the muse are read with equal delight and profit by the lower orders in other countries But I am not aware that this can, to any

extent, be affirmed of any other people save the Scotch. Now the inference seems plain to me that where you find the laboring classes not only relishing their own poetry, but poetry of *a foreign growth*, and that of the highest order, there must be a strong poetic element in that people.

But next, Scotland has had in all ages, as we have stated, a succession of poets. While her literature was yet in its infancy, she may be said to have lisped in verse. Before CHAUCER had tuned his grand old harp to delight the English people, there were many Bards who, in a wild and plaintive way, were singing sweetly to their countrymen on the North of the Tweed. Nor were they mere rhymesters, as "BLIND HARRY," and others. From what has reached us of these ancient lays, although often rude both in language and thought yet one cannot fail to discover in them very rare poetic qualities. Indeed at a comparatively very early period, Scotland had Poets, such as GAVIN DOUGLAS, and BUCHANAN, who acquired a European reputation. The point, however, on which I am anxious you should fasten is this: that Scotland has not only had admirable poets among her educated sons, but that there have, in every age, arisen from among her hard working classes, most sweet singers, who, by the simplicity, majesty and tenderness of their verse, have charmed the most cultivated minds in all parts of the world. I do not know anything in Pastoral poetry equal to the "*Gentle Shepherd*," which was the work of an humble Scotchman. And it were easy to bring forward volumes of lyrical poetry produced by men who toiled for their daily bread, equal *in every attribute*, to the finest specimens of the Classic Muse. Now, when we find that the peasants and mechanics among a people have produced a large mass of poetry, containing not only very noble thoughts, and just and exquisite feeling, but characterized by the highest finish which the best taste can require, we naturally ask—What are the causes of this? The question is surely one of interest not merely to Scotchmen, but to every man of reflection.

I shall divide what I think *the chief causes* of the poetic element in the Scottish character into four branches.

First—*The natural causes which contribute to this.*

The scenery of every country, with those objects in nature intimately connected with scenery, have much to do in the formation of national character. Men who live in flat countries, or on wide Savannas, where there is properly little or no scenery, may be industrious, moral and brave, but are seldom imaginative; nor do we find that their minds are stored with images of what is great or beautiful in nature. Nature around them cannot furnish such. It is not denied that a people, such as the Hollanders, may, after a sort, possess the poetic element; for wherever the human bosom feels strongly the passions of hope, joy, fear or remorse, and where hearts mingle in social life so as to taste its bliss together, or share its trials or disappointments, there are very precious materials for the poet, and poets may arise who shall work these materials into tender and instructive verse. Indeed, some of the noblest pieces of poetry but celebrate the emotions of the human breast, or some touching vicissitude in domestic life. Nor must it be overlooked that the poet who merely combines the images of external nature, although he may produce a piece of fine painting, yet cannot in this way either enrich the understanding with great moral sentiments, or move the heart, or awaken or sooth the conscience. For the mere painting of external nature, the pencil on the whole is a better instrument than the pen, unless the pen is in the hand of a man of very peculiar genius. It will, nevertheless, be readily admitted, that the capacity to paint natural scenery, has been possessed to an extraordinary degree by some Scottish poets. From some of these writers it were easy to select pictures of nature, possessing to a wonderful extent, truthfulness and beauty of delineation. In support of this, I need only remind you of Thomson's *Seasons*, Scott's *Lady of the Lake*, some portions of Burns, and some admirable pieces by Drummond, of Hawthornden.

But to return; our position is that scenery, and in this case the scenery of Scotland, has helped to nurse the poetic element in the people. It should be observed, however, that the scenery that has vastness, grandeur and beauty, *does far more* for the poet, than merely teach him to paint nature to the eye of the fancy. There is indeed nothing in nature so plain, as not to yield to the poet a sentiment or an image of beauty. This is clearly seen, when by the touch of his genius he makes sparkling thoughts and even moral beauties start out from primroses, gowans, or an aged thorn. But if the poet has thus a microscopic eye for the minute in nature, so that he can draw forth many little beauties and hidden charms, he has also an eye of strong vision for what is great, and a heart capable of being deeply moved by whatever is grand. Who can doubt that the soul of that man is acquiring much nourishment for the poetic element, who from earliest childhood has gazed from morning to night on nature, seen in her grandeur, beauty and sweetness. He that looks on all this, with true vision of soul, is not merely learning to paint nature, but is looking with that wonder, love and delight, which breed great thoughts and pure emotions; and which must beget a pleasing complacency with all things around him. Indeed, he that grows up amidst grand and beautiful scenery is in a school, in which, not only his intellect, but his heart may be highly cultivated.

But Scotland is remarkably rich in this kind of scenery. Her lofty mountains with their bald or hoary front, on which often lowers the frown of troubled clouds; and her wild and desolate moors, waterfalls, and rocky coast, with its stormy ocean, are all well fitted to teach great and solemn thoughts. Nor is there any want of what is fitted to teach the beautiful, in nature. The little spring leaping from the moss-covered rock, the winding glen, with its golden broom, green birks, purple heath, thyme and primroses, furnish innumerable beautiful images for the fancy of the poet. There is assuredly much in mere natural scenery for the poet; yet, in order that it shall awaken the sympathies of his heart into moral

emotions, *the works of man* must mingle with those of nature. Fine scenery may have much for fancy, but without man and his works, it can have but little to charm the breast. It is the combination of human labors with the works of nature, that furnishes indirectly or by contrast, what yields so much to awaken moral sentiments and emotions. We soon weary if we have only natural scenery, or a *sameness of scenery.* It is the mingling of the little with the grand, the beautiful with the rugged, and art with nature, that gives to scenery its true poetic charms. In Canada the want of this is felt to a sad extent. In our rivers, lakes and waterfalls, we have much of what is grand, and in our primeval forests we have wildness, but the grandeur is too much alone; you get wearied even with the sameness of sublimity, while the wildness very often wants the beautiful in contrast. Hence our scenery is felt to be monotonous, but all monotony is hurtful to thought, but especially to the play of fancy. Nor in this country are the tasteful works of man seen as in Scotland, in combination with, or in striking contrast to what is wild in nature. Here when you leave human habitations you see nothing but the wilderness, or only see man struggling with it on its outskirts, but in Scotland you see civilization in all its elegancy, nestling in sweet repose, in many a wild nook, near to which savage nature still appears in all its natural ruggedness. Look from the top a Scottish mountain—*here* you see masses of naked rocks piled to the clouds, *there* a desert moor; but only turn your eye in another direction, and what a glorious spectacle of beauty and life!—valleys covered with golden harvests, and dotted over with a hundred farm houses; a ruined castle is seen in the distance on its crag, while a princely mansion lies at your feet, embosomed amidst ancient elms and oaks,—far off are seen villages, and still farther off, rises it may be, the smoke of some great city. Nor is this all; on how many spots does the eye of the Scotchman look, that are hallowed to the mind of the patriot and the christian by impressive historic events? Hence is it that the whole face of the country is an *open book,* rich with facts

to awaken very noble and tender associations. The battle field, where patriotism fought for liberty, or the grassy knoll, where the martyr died for the truth, must ever give to scenery a peculiar moral influence. In a word, Scottish scenery possesses in an eminent degree, not only what is grand and beautiful, but also those contrasts, combinations and sacred spots, pregnant with moral associations, which make the whole so fruitful, not only of lofty conceptions, but of the most touching emotions. Such scenery can hardly fail to nourish the poetic element in the mind of the people.

Let me just hint at another source of emotions fitted to produce this. *Scotland has birds.* And the songsters of the grove have ever been favorites, and I may add helps, to the singers of the harp and the lyre. Who has not heard of the birds of Scotland? But let me speak for a moment to those who have heard them. It is not yet the dawn, but near it; you are standing on the gentle slope a hill; the morning star is growing dim, for the greater light is coming; beneath you lies a narrow glen, its sides covered with the birk, the hazel and the broom; you look down but all is still save the murmuring of the burn, which comes sweetly on your ear through the gray mist; but while you listen to this with delight, and gaze on the peaceful scene, your ear catches a few chirpings from the glen. Yes, they are awakening, the birds are awakening, and as the rays of light increase, the chirpings break into notes, and the notes into loud warbling melody, for now from tree and bush, through all the glen, there bursts forth one universal song—a grand chorus of heaven-taught music. The linnet, the goldfinch, the black bird and the mavis, have all taken up their several parts, and their various notes so mingle together that the sylvan orchestra sends forth a melody most rich, varied, sweet and even sublime. Oh, ye that have heard this music into what land soever ye may wander, can ye ever forget it? But hark, what is this now above you! Yes, it is even so, the lark is on the wing. Lie down on your back now and look up; you see one little black speck after another rising from the earth, and melting away into the blue sky

All overhead has become vocal with such glorious music, that for a moment you are at loss to know whether the air is filled with the notes of songsters going up from earth, or with the music of angels coming down from above. To those who have heard this on a May morning, these hints will have *a meaning*, but to those who have not, no description can give the least idea of the rich and delicious music made by the birds of Scotland. But now mark it, the humblest Scottish peasant boy is regaled every morning, through the long spring and summer with this enchanting music, while his eye at the same time is constantly drinking in the beauties of nature from all hands.

These views might be illustrated by referring for their truth to other countries, but to few countries can the reference be made with greater truth than to Arabia Felix. The Arabs were of old, and still are a highly poetical people. External nature has assuredly been one of the causes that has given to the mind of the Arab its peculiar poetical turn. Yet it must be observed, that material nature, be it ever so rich in imagery, is only one cause of the poetic in a people, and indeed unless the soul of a people has the moral capacity of turning this to proper account, it will avail nothing. Many countries remarkable for fine scenery, have produced no poet. If the national mind be debased by sensualism, or corrupted by the malign passions, it never can fall into a genial sympathy with the beauties of nature. For it is ever true, that the soul must have an eye "to see what is in nature," else the bodily eye will see but little. But

SECONDLY.—*The eventful history of the Scottish people has tended to develope the poetic element in their character.*

I do not refer to the particular form of government under which the Scotch have lived. Poetry has flourished under all forms of civil government. It is true, if a government be so thoroughly tyrannous as to destroy all personal liberty and all freedom of thought, the powers of the mind are then so completely crushed, that genius of all kinds perishes;

but if the poet be left free to think and utter what he chooses in his own glorious domain, he may give utterance even under despotic government to the finest poetry. Still, he must have liberty in its *essence*, else great and just thoughts cannot flourish in his soul. A people of greatness of mind if enslaved, may sing pathetically over their lost freedom, but the song will be the requiem of national genius. But, although the Scottish people often suffered much oppression from various quarters, yet it is worthy of notice that it either left considerable freedom for moral and intellectual action personally, or it exasperated the popular mind into fierce resistance. The latter happened not seldom, and was frequently attended by notable results.

It is no vain boast to say, that for more than sixteen hundred years, through which the national existence ran ere the Kingdom of Scotland was merged by union into that of England: never for once did Scotland submit to a foreign yoke.

The Wars of the Scots have nursed their poetic element. It is true that mere wars for conquest, as they cherish the lust of ambition and strengthen all the cruel and selfish feelings, can never give rise to sentiments that are great, just and benevolent. But Scotland was happily seldom in a condition to make wars of aggression. It was fortunate for her that in those instances in which her martial spirit was thoroughly aroused, it was to defend, not to attack; hence all her great wars have been made in defence of her civil or religious liberty. This, in all cases, was done with energy, and often with desperate valor. In no people has the love of liberty burned more intensely, and in no country has liberty been more frequently baptised in blood, than in Scotland. It is curious, and really note worthy, that when history first lifts the curtain, you see the wild natives of Caledonia standing at bay at the foot of the Grampian Mountains, in stern conflict with the legions of Rome. The Eagles that had been carried triumphantly to the banks of the Tigris, had also been carried to the banks of the Tay; but the Genius of liberty stepping forth from her mountain home, forbade them to advance farther. But the

national spirit of liberty which tried its young strength with the armies of Rome, grew with the growth of the people, and had many other sore battles to fight. For hundreds of years the Scotch had to struggle for their liberties against the whole power of England, nor did they yield till England sought and obtained that peaceful union which has been the cause of numberless blessings to both countries.

Nor does Scotland appear less worthy of admiration when seen contending for that highest kind of liberty—liberty of conscience. When the noblest portion of her people fought for this, how truly grand was the spectacle? Ill armed, ill disciplined, ill led, divided frequently, deafeated often, gibbeted, tortured, peeled and scattered: yet for twenty-eight years did these champions of liberty, these soldiers of conscience, struggle for their rights, and struggled till they gained them. After all allowance is made—and that is not little—for the crotchets, follies and faults of the *Covenanters*, yet who will not say that great honor is due to the brave men who would not yield up to force, the rights which God had given them, and the claims that their country and posterity had on them?

It has indeed been the good fortune of the Scotch, that when the national mind has been moved to its depths, it has always been about some question involving great principles. Now, while this indicates much native force of character, it also goes a great way in the formation of some of the finest and most powerful characteristics of a people, and tends to minister to the poetic element, in some of its purest forms. I do not speak of the mere heroic poetry which may spring from this:—the fact is, the intense excitment of the mind of a nation, when contending for great principles, carries the poetical sentiment far above and beyond what is peculiar to martial poetry. For I hold that a people who, through a long tract of ages, were ever prepared to hazard all for national independence and religious freedom, must not only have had an original stock of greatness to begin with, but must in all their struggles for these great ends, have acquired

very noble sentiments, and have had all their feelings purified and elevated. One needs not wonder to hear the Muse of such a people utter the deepest wailings of sorrow over defeat, or pour forth a simple and majestic song when worthy efforts are crowned with success. If the life of a people has for ages been an actual tragedy, it were surprising indeed if the national Muse should not be able to sing a becoming chorus. The truth is, when the national heart has been long agonized with sore calamities nobly borne, or gladdened by great triumphs bravely won, it becomes the natural fountain of great thoughts, emotions and actions. It is true, a people may pass through scenes that give to national character its innate strength and brightest hues, and yet never produce great poets. The energies of such a people may take a different direction : yet there is no doubt there is much of the poetic element in them. And assuredly there is as little doubt that the intellectual and moral nurture which the Scotch received, in the trying political conditions through which they passed in their national history, contributed greatly to produce the true elements of this in the national mind. But

THIRDLY.—*The conditions and habits of the Scotch in social life, must also have tended to foster in them the poetic element.*

Society has its grades, and in these lie its various relations, while among these grades, you are to look for its moral developements. If you can tell me with accuracy, what the sentiments and feelings are which are cherished betwixt the ruler and subject, master and servant, parent and child, the minister and his flock,—then I shall not only be able to tell you with considerable accuracy, what is the real state of that people as to their intellectual, moral and social well being, but I will venture to read the horoscope of the next generation. If *these relations* are rightly understood, and are cherished with sentiments of love, esteem and respect, and the duties they imply faithfully performed, then that people will be powerful, happy and prosperous,—and their mind

fruitful of everything that is good :—but if these relationships betwixt master and servant, parent and child, neighbor and neighbor, are ill understood, and the duties performed, such as they are, from *mere selfish necessity*, without love, reverence or esteem, then it may be affirmed with painful truthfulness,—let that people possess what they may of wealth, or material appliances,—they are morally and socially wretched; and are mentally unfit for producing either noble thoughts or great actions. Depend on it when a selfish necessity has to supply the place of sincere friendships among neighbors, and genial sympathies betwixt superiors and inferiors, the better part of moral worth has perished, or will soon perish from among that people. Their very force of character becomes repulsive, and in its general tendency, destructive; for although the energy of thorough selfishness may amaze or appal by its efforts, it never can delight the heart or benefit society; and must in the end, be fatal to all true greatness. On the other hand, the right social condition of a people is the nurse of grand sentiments, of pure moral feelings, and of all the high efforts of man for the good of his fellow men. A people sound, *or in the main sound*, in their social relationships, possess the true principles for national dignity, happiness and stability. I cannot doubt the application of these views to the present inquiry, nor can I think them wholly irrevelant as to certain lessons they should furnish for the times in which we live.

I am far from thinking that the social relationships of the Scottish people have ever been perfect; yet, it will hardly be questioned, that for a long period, the condition of the relations of man to man in social life in Scotland, had much in it, to interest alike the Christian and the Philosopher. With all its defects, it nevertheless had much in it, admirably fitted to knit the hearts of men together. The lord and the vassal, not only felt their mutual dependence, but their relation tended wonderfully to cherish confidence, love and esteem betwixt them and the same may be affirmed of the relations betwixt master and servant, and betwixt neighbor and neighbor. If necessity

often compelled these relationships; yet, they seldom rested on mere selfishness. There was indeed, to an extraordinary degree, in all the relationships of the Scotch a noble fellowship of heart, and a genial feeling of brotherhood. When men are held together for material interests, it surely is well if they are also held together by higher and purer ties. In any of the relationships of life, this is every way important but in the nearer relationships of parent and child, minister and flock, it becomes pressingly needful in order that men shall realize the chief blessings of society: for it is plain, that without love and a deeply rooted respect, man's relationship to man in social life can yield few benefits, and will be productive of many sore evils.

But to return to our subject, and apply these principles, I cannot believe that I am wrong in thinking, that for ages the social condition of the Scotch, in their relationships to one another was admirably fitted to produce neighborly communings, and wide spread, and genuine friendships, springing from confidence, esteem and love. Now assuming this to be true, it is easy to see how admirably adapted this condition of things must have been, not only for diffusing knowledge but what was better, heartfelt kindness. Among such a people, friendly intercourse has a real meaning—a meaning which it would be well for all to try and understand. The frank and confiding fellowship, which is characteristic of social parties, who are animated with the principles to which I refer, lead to an interchange of thought which not only rapidly increases knowledge, but gives a peculiar mellowness to the ideas that are in this way treasured up, rather *in the heart* than in the memory. Even homely sentiments when they come warm from the breast of those we love and respect have a sort of poetry in them, while sentiments of great wisdom and feeling thus uttered, furnish material that yields the very finest poetry. The poet himself may not always be aware how much he is indebted for his choicest thoughts and fancies, to the free talk of a social circle, where all hearts are warm, and all bosoms transparent. Nor has it been a small

matter to Scottish intellect and imagination, that from the long residence of families in the same place, each neighborhood has its local history, often extending back through several generations. Making due allowance for much that is trivial, still it is difficult to over-estimate the value of this sort of history in furnishing matter for the poet, even when it may contain nothing more than the joys and sorrows, the heavy trials, or successful triumphs of humble families. Let no man sneer at parish history; for is there not to be found in every neighborhood, in which tradition has *faithfully recorded* the sad vicissitudes of domestic life, stories as intensely tragical as any that have been brought on the stage. Some of these stories might furnish matter for no mean Epic poem on domestic life, and assuredly have furnished matter for many a noble ballad, and many a pathetic song. Indeed, out of this has come not a little of the finest poetry of the Scotch people. Yet mark it, but for their peculiar social characteristics, and the genial way in which their social relationships were realized, little of this valuable material could have existed for the poet, nor would there have arisen poets who could have wrought it into immortal verse. If you do not undestand fully what I mean, go and read with care, "THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT," or any similar piece unfolding social life and social intercourse among the Scotch. Assuredly the poets of Scotland had never furnished for the world some of their finest productions, had they not lived among a people eminently social.

But there now goes among thoughtful men a very general remark, that if this were true formerly, it is not so now. The feeling, or with such persons, rather the complaint is, that within the present century the social intercourse that breeds friendship, has greatly decayed in all branches of the great Anglo-Saxon family. Without stopping to enquire how far this is true, or to investigate its causes, suffice it to say, if it be true, few things are more symptomatic, that some of the finest qualities of the heart are decaying, and some of the best safeguards of society are giving way. Assuredly, if men

only come together for intercourse at the calls of avarice, or under some partizan or sectarian influence, they not only want much which they should have, but will find that *they will soon want more,* which they cannot do without. It is a mistake to suppose that the strong and virtuous minded man loves isolation. A strong mind is social, the healthy mind genial, while the virtuous mind ever seeks a loving fellowship with other minds. Without a frank social intercourse, thought can neither be acquired nor used to good purpose, and plainly without this, the heart cannot be kept in a healthy condition.. Every wise and good man has a firm faith in the truth of this. For really what is man without virtuous friendships?—not great, nor good, useful, nor happy, but a cold hearted, selfise, miserable being. It is an ill symptom of society, when there is little friendly intercourse among neighbors, and if possible even a worse symptom, when this has become so coldly artificial and formal, that there is no room left for feeling hearts to give vent to warm and spontaneous emotions.

But for ages, the Scottish people, from the highest to the lowest, were eminently social, while their social intercourse, in all its various modes, was admirably fitted to store the memory with new ideas, to sharpen the judgment, to keep the fountains of the breast flowing, and to cultivate the imagination. Indeed I have a thorough conviction that the kind of social intercourse which long prevailed among the Scotch, has had a great deal to do with the formation of the national character, and unquestionably has done much to give to their mind a poetical turn. In fact, a people who do not possess social qualities and tastes that are sincere, intellectual and simple, can never have among them the materials out of which poetry is elaborated, nor could they appreciate poetry of a high order if it were brought to them. To an unsocial people, let no poet attempt to sing:—Nor indeed among such a people can a true poet ever arise, for a true poet, must ever ardently love his fellow-men, and seek for near and dear fellowship with them,—he must have the instinctive capacity

of going into the heart of his fellow-men, and of surveying and deeply sympathizing with their tenderest joys and bitterest woes. He must know in a word, how to mingle his smile, his laugh, his sigh and his tear, with the gladness and the griefs of others; else, his strains will never ravish the heart. He who cannot do this may make verses *to the measure* but never will produce poetry, and while he may write to please his own vanity, it would be well for him, not to choose any higher theme for his sonnet than the ivory headed cane of his friend, or the beauties of a silver dollar. But

FOURTH.—*The religiousness of the Scotch has yielded very much for the poetic element in the national mind.*

If men are in earnest in their religion, it will give its peculiar stamp to their character. Nor is this wonderful, seeing that all our primary thoughts on subjects of deepest interest, and all the emotions that most powerfully affect the heart and conscience, are drawn thence. The formalist and hypocrite, scarcely less than the infidel, sadly misconceive the force of religious belief in earnest minds. But in this, every thing depends on the quality of the principles believed. If these are the truths of God, by which the soul is conformed to a likeness to its Maker, led to fellowship with Him and obedience to His laws, then the religion believed becomes to man a source of every thing excellent.

It is worthy of notice, that in the earliest times, the natives of Scotland were *in their way*, a religious people. When they first appear in history, they were of course pagans and their paganism was Druidism, which was an exceedingly corrupt form of the patriarchal religion. Yet even this religion, corrupt as it was, had in it particles of truth fitted in many ways to benefit the human mind. Besides,—and this very much concerns our inquiry—Druidism with all its horrid rites, was nevertheless to a considerable extent an intellectual system, and partook largely of the poetic. The whole knowledge of the Druidical priesthood, which was somewhat varied and extensive, was thrown into verse and committed

to the memory. The system, as a whole, was no doubt a dark and despotic superstition; yet, apart from other incidental advantages it conferred on barbarous tribes, it may have contributed not a little to the cultivation of metrical composition, and may have given to the people a taste for the rudiments of true poetry. It is not strange to think that two thousand years ago, the Druids in their groves may have been giving to the Scottish mind its first lessons in that art which Scott, Burns, Campbell, and Pollok, have carried to such perfection?

But be all this as it may, it is at least certain, that Scotland at a very early period was blessed with a knowledge of the true religion. The seminary of Iona was at a remote age, "A fountain of sacred learning," not only to Scotland but to many other lands. It is pleasing to think, that in these primitive times, a pious and laborious order of clergy among the Culldees, were scattered over the whole country These men appear to have imbued the Scottish mind with a pure christianity, at a time, the greater part of Europe was still under gross darkness. The Culldees, indeed, appear to have given to the national character, that peculiar impression which it has borne for thirteen hundred years. How little do we know, when and how, the first seeds of great thoughts were cast into a nation's bosom. It is true, Popery for ages choked the good seed, and greatly spoiled its fruitfulness; yet, it is worthy of notice, that as in no country was the Reformation more complete than in Scotland, so in no country, did it find so much in the popular mind to sympathize with its lessons. From the time of the Culldees, gospel truth never lost its hold on the Scottish mind.

But my object is not to write a dessertation on the history of religion in Scotland, nor even to show at large how the national character has been moulded by religion; but mainly to show how the religious belief of the people has ministered to the poetic element in their character. No principle is more obvious than this that the poetry of a people will, to

a great extent, take its complexion from their religious beliefs. This was true of the poetry of Greece, of the poetry of Italy during the middle ages, (as may be seen in Dante and others,) and also to a great extent, it is true of the poetry of England, for what were the productions of Milton, or Young, if stripped of their religion. Hence, to overlook the influence of the religion of the Scotch were, in this inquiry, to lose sight, not only of the most powerful cause of the poetic element in the character of that people, but also of the highest qualities in their poetry. Keeping in mind then what has been stated, that every thing in this will depend on the qualities of the religious principles believed, we will get at the heart of our view, by briefly noticing a few of the religious characteristics of the Scotch.

The Religion of Scotland has long been emphatically a *Bible religion*, while its characteristics have partaken far more of the spiritual, than of the formal whenever it has been deeply felt. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was thorough, just as far as true prominence was given by the reformers in different countries to the Bible. Whatever faults may be imputed to the Scottish reformers, it cannot be said that they failed to give the Bible a prominent place, for they not only professed to take it as their sole guide in doctrine and practice, but their aim was to have the popular mind, in all the instruction it should receive from the pulpit, at the fireside, and in all schools and colleges, imbued deeply by *its truths*. This grand theory has never, it must be confessed, been fully carried into practice; yet all silly partiality set off as impertinent here, it may nevertheless be broadly affirmed, that no country has been placed more completely under the influence of Bible truth than Scotland. What has been the outcome? Alas, my friends, whether this be asked in earnest, or in scorn, one has to answer mournfully, not all that might be expected. Ah no, and yet no candid inquirer can fail to see, that for generations the Scottish character was to a wonderful degree moulded by the truths learned from that volume, which had become in more senses than

one, the national book. Hence one does not wonder that the Scottish mind has been long characterized by a peculiar reverence in its religious beliefs and practices. But it is worthy of notice, that the religious reverence cherished by the Scotch, has been chiefly for what is spiritual in doc trine and worship, and not for the externals of religion. Now I cannot but think that this sort of reverence, very generally and strongly felt by a people, must have a direct tendency to raise and solemnize their mind, so that they shall be able justly so appreciate whatever is great in any sentiment, action or object on which the soul is fixed. But profound reverence, for the spiritual and the sacred is a quality essential to the poet, who would either reach the loftiest conceptions of things, or open the deepest fountains of the heart and conscience. Scottish poets have to an astonising degree done both, just because they had been taught on the best principles how to revere aright. Undoubtedly from other books and other sources they learned much, but for their loftiest flights, and grandest achievements, their mind acquired its main strength from Bible truth and spiritual religion.

And yet it is rather a curious fact, that although several Scottish poets have written many small pieces of sacred poetry, of transcendent excellence, and also a few of them have produced large works in the same department, yet sacred poetry, for devotional purposes, forms but a small portion of the poetry of Scotland. The Psalmody, which has been used for more than two hundred years, was the production of an Englishman, and perhaps the value the Scotch attach to this incomparable Psalmody, may have made them careless, or afraid to attempt the writing of sacred songs, either for public or private devotion. Be this as it may, the Scottish Muse for several ages, produced but little sacred poetry. The people appear to have thought the poetry of David and Asaph, enough for sacred purposes, and the poets tuned their lyres to other, and sometimes, alas! far different subjects. Well then, it may be asked, if the religious senti-

ment in the Scottish mind did not produce much sacred poetry for a long time, what was its influence in creating, or directing the poetic element in the national heart? Its influence directly, has ever been very great,—its indirect influence far greater. As has been already hinted, when the mind of a people has been thoroughly imbued with Bible truth, this naturally gives a grandeur to all their thinking, and a depth and purity to their feelings, while it opens up new springs of thought, and brings into play many new and powerful emotions. It is a pity that men do not better understand the power of the Bible for producing all kinds of good results. For in addition to its power of leading men to God for salvation, and of regulating the conscience, it has also a mighty power to refine the feelings, and elevate the imagination. It is no fancy to say, that did a people so mix faith with the reading of the Bible, that they would fully realize every statement in it to be God's own word, or to have God's sanction as truth,—that people would, in time, produce such poetry, eloquence, philosophy,—wisdom in council, and withal such a noble bearing in conduct, as the world has not yet seen. *Bible power* but partially felt,—and the results will only be partially good, yet even these, in their different sorts, will have much of greatness and worth. Now it must be confessed that Bible power has never been more than partially felt by the Scotch: yet it has been felt by them to an extent which has produced among them varied, and on the whole, great results. It will not be inferred that I think all Scottish poets have been men of piety. It is painful to admit what it were worse than folly to deny, that the Scottish Harp has not always been touched by the hand of sanctified genius. Your admiration for wit and original conceptions, is often sorely tried by an alloy of unhallowed sentiment you find in pieces of great poetical merit. Yet, let it be said with high satisfaction, that the portion of poetry of Scotland, which is offensive to a moral and pious taste, is small indeed compared with the vast mass that is holy, pure and every way healthful to the mind. And it is a striking fact that even when Scottish

poets are most forgetful of what is due to moral feelings, they can never wholly forget their early Bible lessons, nor wholly quench the light which, in various ways, had broken in on their souls from the Bible imbued popular mind, by which they had been touched from so many points. Such pieces as "*Man was made to mourn*," and "*Bonny Kilmeny*," had never been produced had not these great, though erring geniuses, lived among a people whose whole thinking was permeated by the elevating and refining influences of Bible truth. Yes, it is mournful to see a mighty genius walking within the scope of this divine light, yet not walking by the light. Still it is marvelous to see, how his soul will, as it were, incidentally reflect rays of this light to cheer and illumine the minds of others. The truth is, that the Bible not only contains the most precious gems of poetry, but the sublime truths which it unfolds, in their influence on the soul by the spiritual and moral sentiments thus awakened, cannot fail to impart to the mind, the first principles and highest qualities of poetry. And while it were criminal folly to study the Bible merely to cultivate a poetic taste, or acquire poetic elements, yet, no one can question that the Scotch owe not a little of the high and peculiar excellence of their poetry to their intimate acquaintance with the word of God,—their intense veneration for its grand truths, and their reverence for a spiritual religion drawn thence. It is neither wise nor pious to overlook the indirect benefits of religion.

But religious belief in such minds as ours, sometimes yields a very *strange residuum of superstition* The Scotch, it is said, have many superstitious beliefs. This we admit, but at the same time affirm, that the superstition of a religious people—the chaff, or dross of their faith if you will—is the material in which the poet often finds some of his most touching themes. Stories of ghosts, and other supernatural beings, have furnished much for the fancy of the poet. Should we admit, which we do not, that the belief in supernatural appearances has in all cases been a delusion of fancy, still, let it be observed, that this indicates a strong faith in the mind

of a people in a spiritual and supermundane world. But does it not also indicate a low state of intellect? Not necessarily. Dr. Johnson, and many persons of high intellectual attainments have believed in ghosts. It may, however, be admitted that this belief, when held as it often is, shows a faith in the spiritual world irregulated, held in excess:—in short, it manifests a mind that holds the dross as well as the gold of faith. In this vulgar superstition, there may be much to pity, and not a little to condemn, but the condemnation frequently manifests rather the malignant skepticism of the materialist, than the enlightened wisdom of the philosopher. Yes, the Scotch were superstitious, and possibly are so still, but is he the person to sneer at this, who believes there is no soul in man? who believes that the Iliad, the Principia and the Othello were the productions of mere particles of matter secreted from the blood, and thrown together by chance in certain cavities in the head, under the skull? or, who believes that there is no personal and intelligent God, but that this fair and goodly universe hath made itself, or is the product of chance? In all soberness we may ask, is the wildest superstition, with its belief in ghosts, fairies and witches, not high wisdom compared to the atheistic materialist? There are few things at once so melancholy and so funny, as to hear an atheistic materialist laugh at the superstition of the vulgar. For one absurdity which they believe, he believes twenty, while each of his absurdities is as adverse to an enlightened philosophy, as to sound morality. Why should it not be admitted, that a people may in some things believe harmlessly in excess, and still have very noble thoughts of the true spiritual world, and very generous and pure emotions? He is a wise man who knows when to sneer, and can sneer in wise love. The infidel can do neither. He can almost as little understand, or sympathize with the poetic superstition of a people, as he can appreciate the divine principles of their faith.

I offer, of course, no broad apology for the superstitious beliefs of the Scotch, I merely affirm that much of their

beautiful poetry has been drawn thence. And O, how beautiful, pathetic and sublime is some of that poetry which certain of these strange beliefs have yielded! Do you know that song called *"Mary's Dream?"* It is a grand piece. If you can sing, sing it, but I beseech you do not sing it artistically. Sing it with thy heart strings reverberating truly to every note, as thy fingers touch the keys of thine instrument, and do this alone, when no simperings and prattlings around thee shall mar thy emotions, and spoil the sweetness of thy tears: do it at midnight when all is still, and then tell me, if these strange beliefs have not yielded some of the most exquisite poetry. Yet this wonderful song is but one of innumerable gems of the same kind which have been dug from this curious mine of belief, and which now enrich the cabinet of Scottish poetry. Nor should it escape notice, that while this superstitious belief has yielded much of the most pathetic poetry, it has also furnished not a little characterized by the most exquisite wit and humor. Who can think of poor Tam O'Shanter, on that doleful ride of his by Alloway Kirk, and across the bridge of Doon, without having a most vivid apprehension to what a wonderful extent the genius of a poet could turn the superstitious beliefs of a people, not only for framing a story, but for giving expression to the wisest reflections, the loftiest sentiments, the most powerful passions and the most grotesque humor.

As an illustration of these principles fancy the influence of the tales upon the mind of the child Byron, as told him by old inhabitants who dwelt among the hills and glens around the steep frowning glories of dark Loch na Garr. After travelling in other countries, how tame was all he had seen and heard, compared with the impressions made in childhood when he wandered "from morn to noon, and from noon to dewy eve," around the hills where every crag he reached he thought he saw the ghost of some of his ancestors:—

Away, ye gay landscapes, ye gardens of roses,
In you let the minions of luxury rove;
Restore me the rocks where the snow-flake reposes,

Though still they are sacred to freedom and love:
Yet, Caledonia, beloved are thy mountains—
Round their white summits though elements war,
Though cataracts foam, 'stead of smooth-flowing fountains,
I sigh for the valley of dark Loch na Garr.

Ah! there my young footsteps in infancy wander'd,
My cap was the bonnet, my cloak was the plaid;
On chieftains long perish'd my memory ponder'd,
As daily I strode through the pine-cover'd glade:
I sought not my home till the day's dying glory
Gave place to the rays of the bright polar star;
For Fancy was cheer'd by traditional story
Disclosed by the natives of dark Loch na Garr.

"Shades of the dead! have I not heard your voices
Rise on the night-rolling breath of the gale?"
Surely the soul of the hero rejoices,
And rides on the wind o'er his own Highland vale:
Round Loch na Garr, while the stormy mist gathers,
Winter presides in his cold icy car;
Clouds there encircle the forms of my fathers—
They dwell in the tempests of dark Loch na Garr.

Years have roll'd on, Loch na Garr, since I left you;
Years must elapse ere I tread you again;
Nature of verdure and flowers has bereft you,
Yet still you are dearer than Albion's plain:
England! thy beauties are tame and domestic
To one who has roamed on the mountains afar;
Oh! for the crags that are wild and majestic,
The steep frowning glories of dark Loch na Garr.

But having now noticed what I conceive to be the grand causes of the poetic element in the Scottish character, let me in conclusion, point out some of the minor causes. In doing this I would notice

1st.—*The national love of music.*

On Scottish music, I do not pretend to speak with professional knowledge; yet, those competent to do so have assigned to it a very high place for its simplicity, pathos, and wild tenderness. Indeed to know that it possesses these qualities, does not require a scientific knowledge of music,

but only a soul capable of keenly relishing what is true in music. But, this is to be specially remarked, that the music of the Scotch is not only of a high order, but they have for ages been passionately fond of singing. Among the middle and lower ranks of society, song singing has ever formed one of their chief sources of enjoyment in their social meetings, and I will add, a very refined enjoyment. Indeed the Scotch were so passionately fond of singing, that they sung—I hope it is so still—at their employments, whether in the workshop, or the field. Their songs were generally of the highest order of poetic merit, and the enjoyment they had in singing, I presume, was all the greater, that they generally took their lessons more from nature than from art. Yet, it must not be supposed that the Scotch only gave vent to their love of music for enjoyment in song singing. I have heard intelligent foreigners affirm, that the grandest music they have ever listened to, was in a large Scottish congregation, when *with one heart and one voice*, they poured forth in lofty and harmonious swell the praises of their God in His sanctuary.

Art, assuredly, has a legitimate place in music, nor has Scottish music failed to avail itself of the lessons of art. But, although I am no great authority on the matter, yet I cannot help thinking, that modern art has of late been playing sad tricks with music, and has now very nearly succeeded in stripping it of all that is natural, tender and grand, and has only to go a little farther in order to banish all good music from social life. There is reason to hope, that after the artistic of bad taste has done its worst, things may mend, and the soul of man may yet again be moved to ecstacy, and taste delicious enjoyment from music wedded to high poetic thought, and poured into the ear with all the fascination of *natural and truthful* execution. Yet doubt it not, that these ancient tunes and melodies which sprung from the great feeling heart of the Scottish people, were often as much the *effect* as the *cause* of the poetic element in their character. The soul full of poetry will at least hum musically, if it cannot sing with harmonious effect.

But next, *the truthfulness in the Scottish mind*, must have done much, if not to produce, at least to strengthen and elevate the poetic element.

I am neither so silly nor vain as to say, that all Scotchmen have ever been, or now are sincere in their convictions, and truth-speaking men. No country has produced more vicious sophists than Scotland, and were I to say that Scotchmen have never been equivocaters, or liars, you might well laugh at my own weakness, or falsity. It may not be easily done; yet, the fact is—when a Scotchman has once got his conscience fairly clapt under the hatches, he can tack and veer in a very amazing way. But sad exceptions allowed for, and still I cannot but think that there has been for ages, and I hope there is yet, a great basis of solid truthfulness in the national mind. Now, this has aided the poetic element to an extent not easily estimated. For if a musical ear, as has been already hinted, assists the poet to harmonize his syllables, it is sincerity of soul that enables him to harmonize things in the wonderful combinations he gives them. But a truth-loving people see and hear the harmony of things in all their deeper meanings. The real strength of the poetic power lies in this. The world is full of the beautiful, the great, the just and the tender, but the false man can see nothing of it; the sincere can alone look on this order of things with admiration and delight. A false man may make many things for himself besides money and a trumpery fame, but let him by no manner of means attempt to make poetry for the hearts of sincere men. This he can never do—for the tones of the harp only ravish your heart, when touched by the hand of the man intensely truthful.

It is but an expansion of this principle, when we say, that *the genuine simplicity of the olden Scottish character* has done not a little for the poetic element that is in it. Affectation is every way mischievous;—not only pernicious to the conscience, but very hurtful also to the heart, intellect and imagination. A character marked by a broad simplicity, ever possesses truth, modesty and humility. Now although

this beautiful character does not necessarily imply genius, yet assuredly there never was poetic genius that did not largely partake of it. Simplicity unfolds itself under different aspects in different poets. It has sometimes appeared in a sweet childlike artlessness; at other times it has shown itself in a bold, frank and hearty bearing; but, in all true poets, it has existed, else they had never been great in their vocation. The servants of the Muses must be no cunning menials, full of finesse and artifice; but truthfully simple in all their views, feelings and actions. But here again I must deprecate misconstruction, or unfair inference. I do not deny but Scotland has furnished specimens of affectation, cant, and even brazen impudence, still I presume no candid man will question, that for ages the national mind of that country has been characterized by a great deal of natural simplicity. This has indeed been so prominent a characteristic, that travellers in Scotland have often mistaken it, especially in the young, for an ignorant sheepishness. This was quite a mistake, as any one of these travellers would soon have learned, had he attempted grossly to insult any of these sheepish-looking lads. I do not say that this modest simplicity has not been cultivated to excess in Scottish youth of both sexes. I take leave, however, to hint, that if you find a country in which all the boys are forward prating little men, and all the girls prim and pert little women, you need not look among that people either for great poets, or a taste for the best poetry. Indeed, to produce true poets, there must be a simple modesty in youth that keeps the soul long in silent communings with its own thoughts, and which will lead it to look at all things with a natural eye, and listen to all things with a believing ear. A people of this sort have in them the poetic element, even if they never give vent to it in verse.

But lastly, among the minor causes that have contributed to strengthen the poetic element, I cannot overlook *the hard lot of the greater portion of the Scottish people.*

When a people under adverse circumstances sink into sheer pauperism, they quickly lose all that is either beautiful, or

great in character: but, when in spite of a bad soil, bad climate, and other evils incident to their lot, a people are seen bravely fighting poverty to keep it at arms length, they not only acquire a noble independence of feeling, but in these conflicts are really going through a course of training, admirably fitted to cultivate the best principles of the mind. It is then, that the poor man's fireside furnishes the beautiful spectacles of self-denial for the good of others, of kindness in adversity, of honesty amidst temptations, and of prudence in managing to sustain decency with little means:—in a word, of moral heroism doing its hard tasks without a murmur, or a boast. Scotland was long distinguished for all this among her peasantry and farming population. Hence it is that a great deal of the most touching of Scottish poetry has been nurtured by such fire-sides, while not a few of her poets have nobly consecrated their labors to depict, with honest pride, the struggles of poor, virtuous and brave men, with their hard lot. Such a condition of things naturally furnishes material for much poetry that is tender, and in a high sense moral and instructive; while it nurses the poets who can truthfully sing the whole. O! these homes, the Scottish homes, the abodes of truthfulness, deep affection, simple piety and patient toil! have they not been worth singing of, and have they not been nobly sung? Men little know how many of the finest thoughts and feelings they owe to their hard lot in life. We naturally desire a luxurious ease and cheap abundance, but seldom reflect that these may prove scarcely less fatal to intellect and fancy than to the heart and conscience.

But here I close the argument. In trying to answer *the inquiry*, what have been the causes of the poetic element in the Scottish mind? you will observe I have divided these into two classes:—the greater and the less, and have briefly illustrated each topic. Had I been able to command more time, and greater mental freedom from my professional avocations, I might have done more justice to the subject, for assuredly in addition to the causes which I have noticed—and no one

of these has been more than partially discussed—there are other causes, which no doubt have greatly aided the poetic element, and which a rigorous analysis of Scottish character might have detected.

Possibly some of my hearers are disappointed in not having heard quotations from Scottish poets, with critical remarks. Now, although this course might have been very agreeable both to them and to me, yet it would not have accomplished the object I have had in view. The task to which I have set myself, did not lead me to point out the beauties of Scottish poetry, but to analyze the Scottish character under various conditions, in order to detect the latent but powerful causes of the poetical element in it. How far I have succeeded in this difficult and deeply important inquiry, I must now leave to the judgment and candor of those I address.

In conclusion. what a mysteriou sand powerful thing is human thought when it possesses the highest qualities of strength and beauty. Take a map of the world, and you can cover Attica with the point of your finger; yet, from that little spot of earth more than twenty-two centuries ago, there went forth such a stream of thought as yet refreshes the minds of men in all lands. Scotland occupies a space on the map not much greater than ancient Attica. But whatever patriotism or national vanity might wish, truth forbids us to carry out the parallel. Yet truth, as well as patriotism, warrants the statement, that the mind of the Scottish people has exercised a mighty influence on the world in all departments of thought, but especially by means of its wonderful poetry. It is true, Scotland has produced no Shakspeare and no Milton; but the same is true of every other country. The world has had but one Shakspeare,—the world will possibly never see a second Milton. It is no disparagement then to the Genius of Scotland, that she has modestly to veil herself in the presence of the highest of all poetic genius; for indeed when you ask what land has given birth to the greatest of all poets, you must answer England. Nor is this all; England has also produced the greatest Philosophers, and the

ablest of all Statesmen. Nay, when you generalize the question, and ask what country has produced the greatest number of intellects of the highest order in all those departments in which force of mind and originality of thinking have labored most successfully for the advancement of human knowledge, you are still compelled to turn to England. Marvellous country! birth-place of great minds, "and nursery of all noble arts and institutions," and field of the worthiest actions which men have performed for a thousand years, how great art thou! Yet in many ways—and especially in poetry—has not Scotland also been great and done worthily? We have said that the Scottish Muse must veil her face in the presence of her English sister, and yet does she not wear her *crown of Holly with its red berries*, with such a right noble bearing, that all the world does homage to her? For has not the great Harp of Scotland given forth a most true poetry, which has broken on the ears of all men, in all lands, in a very grand song? Persons of taste in every part of the world admire this poetry, and draw instruction from it; for they are edified by its sturdy common sense, melted by its pathos, awed by its grandeur, delighted by its wild flights, soothed by its tenderness, and charmed and improved in heart and conscience by the hallowed sentiments which it breathes. But by all Scotchmen the poetry of their country is loved with a dear attachment. Wander where he may, the child of Caledonia ever carries with him, at least *two books*. When the poor Emigrant lays down his little chest on your wharf, and looks wistfully around him, a stranger in a strange land, yet, be assured, poor as he may be, that there are in that little chest the Book of books, and at least one volume of his country's poetry. His bible, poor man, is to guide him through life, and with its blessed consolation to yield him support at the hour of death. His Scottish poetry is to cheer his weary hours by bringing back to the view of his soul many a distant scene, many a tender joy, and many a hallowed recollection. Yes, and he will often hum these Doric lays that bring up the past, till the tear is in his eye and his heart far away

among the scenes of his youth,—for the poetry of his native land ever brings the Scotchman, as it were, home again to his native land! The Scottish settler in our back woods, in his log cottage, feels this strange fascination as he pores over the favorite stanzas on a winter's evening:—and the Scottish soldier, whether a high-born man leading the forces of his Sovereign, or but a humble private with musket on shoulder, feels too, the sweet fascination of his country's poetry. In the tent, or on the march, when he hears a Scottish song, or hums a few verses, be he among the mountains of Cabul or on the banks of the Irrawady, or on the heights of Sebastopol,—all his soul is instantly moved, as it were by a holy magic, and he is, in a moment, borne in fancy from scenes of toil and of blood, to his own dear native land. For herein lies the marvel,—the poetry of that land has forever wedded the souls of its children to its wild mountains, its sweet glens, and its homes of truth and love. A poetry capable of this must have come from the very depths of the national hear and must possess the very highest qualities of truth an genius. Oh, yes! the harp of Caledonia has tones to charm all hearts; yet it is the heart of the sons and daughters o that land which it thrills with a joy peculiar, and a tender ness which they only can comprehend.

Note.—The preceding Lecture was written to answer th question, as originally put, in reference to the Scotch; and while it answers it directly, it answers the question now put, *indirectly*. The same things that develope the Poetic Genius of one people, will, with certain modifications, develope the Poetic Genius of another.

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